

N A L B O H

National Association of Local Boards of Health

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February 19, 2009

Co Chairs, Senator Toni Harp, Representative John Geragosian, and Members of the Appropriations Committee

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My name is Carolyn Wysocki and I live in Berlin, CT. As the New England Regional Director for the National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH), I am providing testimony on the Governors Budget Bill 847 which would decrease the per capita money to local health departments in an effort to regionalize public health departments.

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NALBOH represents the grassroots foundation of public health in America, and is the only organization in America dedicated to preparing and strengthening boards of health to promote and protect the health of their communities through education, training, and technical assistance. As Advocates for Public Health and Boards of Health, we are concerned that any decrease in funding to Local Health Departments will limit their ability to fulfill the Operational Definition of a Local Health Department and the 10 Essential Functions of Public Health services that any community can reasonably expect to receive. This definition also serves as the framework for the National Public Health Performance Standards and the Local Health Department Standards in the voluntary national accreditation program that is targeted for 2011. These **10 Essential Functions of Public Health Services** include.

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State Affiliate

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
3. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
4. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
5. Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.
6. Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety.
7. Link people to needed personal health services.
8. Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
9. Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
10. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

How can Local Health Departments be expected to provide these functions without the necessary funding support? Decreasing the per capita funding is most likely to result in staffing layoffs and reducing programs and services to the public. This may not be the most constructive course of action to take to protect the public health or to accomplish efficiency, effectiveness, and costs savings that regionalization can potentially bring about.

There are some questions that need to be asked: Could our state and local health departments meet these public health performance standards and expectations? Will Local Health Departments be able to become accredited when accreditation becomes a reality? Is there really a cost saving by eliminating prevention services on one end of the spectrum only to have it reappear in healthcare/treatment cost?

Regionalization of Health Departments is a challenge and an opportunity that needs careful planning, discussions, and negotiating on various levels with input from those affected by the change. Perhaps a Public Health Regionalization Task Force can be formed. Expecting regionalization to become effective July 1, 2009 by legislation seems unrealistic without the maintenance or increase in funding to the regional/district health departments.

Public Health needs a predictable, stable, and reliable funding stream for core public health functions and community-based prevention is essential. An investment in prevention of a disease, injury, or condition leads to a reduction in prevalence or severity of a condition and reductions in health care expenditures—Healthy People in Healthy Communities.

Thank you for listening and I and NALBOH would be glad to help in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carolyn Wysocki". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carolyn" and last name "Wysocki" clearly distinguishable.

Carolyn Wysocki, New England Regional Director

Resources: <http://www.naccho.org>; <http://www.nalboh.org>; <http://www.astho.org>; <http://healthyamericans.org>;
<http://www.cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp/cdcocphnews.htm>